CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. Computer apparatus comprising:

    a plurality of loosely coupled computers;

    a processor routine executable on each of the computers in the plurality, for generating and transmitting a request package, each request package having (i) an indication of an asking price for a good or a bid for a desired good and (ii) constraints on the request package; and

    in a computer receiving the request package, the processor routine generating rules according to the constraints in the received request package, such that the request packages enable open market trading of goods among users of the computers, each user having at least one other user as a prior established business contact.

2. The apparatus as described in Claim 1 wherein a computer receiving a request package has an inventory of the local goods available for selling and the processor routine modifies the rules dependent on the inventory to reflect seller preferences in product availability.

3. The apparatus as described in Claim 2 wherein the processor routine in the computer receiving the request package compares the bid to the inventory and attempts to match supply and demand when permitted by the rules.

4. The apparatus as described in Claim 1 further comprising:

    an interface in a computer sending the request package which allows specification of demand parameters for the desired good and reports back results from a request package traversal of the plurality.

5.   The apparatus as described in Claim 1 wherein a computer transmits a confirmation package that traverses the exact node path of an originally confirmed request package.

6.   The apparatus as described in Claim 5 wherein the confirmation package is transmitted for billing purposes.

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7.   The apparatus as described in Claim 1 wherein the constraints are configured independently via an interface on each computer in the plurality.

8.   Computer apparatus comprising:

a plurality of loosely coupled computers;

10   means for generating and transmitting a request package on each of the computers in the plurality, each request package having (i) an indication of an asking price for a good or a bid for a desired good and (ii) constraints on the request package; and

in a computer receiving the request package, the means for generating

15   and transmitting generating rules according to the constraints in the received request package, such that the request packages enable open market trading of goods among users of the computers, each user having at least one other user as a prior established business contact.

9.   The apparatus as described in Claim 8 wherein a computer receiving a request

20   package has an inventory of the local goods available for selling and the means for generating and transmitting modifies the rules dependent on the inventory to reflect seller preferences in product availability.

10.   The apparatus as described in Claim 9 wherein the means for generating and

25   receiving in the computer receiving the request package compares the bid to the

inventory and attempts to match supply and demand when permitted by the rules.

11.   The apparatus as described in Claim 8 further comprising:

        interface means in a computer sending the request package which allows specification of demand parameters for the desired good and reports back results from a request package traversal of the plurality.

12.   The apparatus as described in Claim 8 wherein a computer transmits a confirmation package that traverses the exact node path of an originally confirmed request package.

13.   The apparatus as described in Claim 12 wherein the confirmation package is transmitted for billing purposes.

14.   The apparatus as described in Claim 8 wherein the constraints are configured independently via an interface on each computer in the plurality.

15.   A computer implemented method for online goods trading comprising:

        in a plurality of loosely coupled computers, generating and transmitting request packages in any one of the computers in the plurality, the request packages having (i) an indication of an asking price for a good or a bid for a desired good and (ii) constraints on the request package; and

        generating rules according to the constraints in the received request package in a computer receiving the request package, such that the request packages enable open market trading of goods among users of the computers, each user having at least one other user as a prior established business contact.

16.   The method as described in Claim 15 wherein a computer receiving a request package has an inventory of the local goods available for selling and the processor routine modifies the rules dependent on the inventory to reflect seller preferences in product availability.

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17.   The method as described in Claim 16 wherein the processor routine in the computer receiving the request package compares the bid to the inventory and attempts to match supply and demand when permitted by the rules.

18.   The method as described in Claim 15 further comprising:

10   an interface in a computer sending the request package which allows specification of demand parameters for the desired good and reports back results from a request package traversal of the plurality.

19.   The method as described in Claim 15 further comprising:

        transmitting a confirmation package for billing purposes that traverses

15   the exact node path of an originally confirmed request package.

20.   The method as described in Claim 15 wherein the constraints are configured independently via an interface on each computer in the plurality.